DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 298 505 CS 211 471

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TITLE An Annotated Bibliography of the Literature Dealing with Language Experience in the Primary Classroom.
PUB DATE 19 Jul 88
NOTE 49p.; Exit project, Indiana University at South Bend.
PUB TYPE Reference Materials - Bibliographies (131) -- Information Analyses (070) -- Dissertations/Theses - Practicum Papers (043)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Annotated Bibliographies; *Language Arts; *Language Experience Approach; Oral Language; Primary Education; Reading Attitudes; *Reading Research; Reading Strategies; Sight Vocabulary; Student Developed Materials; Teaching Methods
IDENTIFIERS *Whole Language Approach

ABSTRACT

This 34-item annotated bibliography examines the literature concerning language experience in the following areas: (1) the rationale for incorporating language arts in the primary classroom; (2) whether using language experience aids the child in developing reading strategies; (3) the achievement scores of children using language experience; (4) whether language experience develops oral language skills; (5) whether language experience aids in increasing sight vocabulary; (6) whether self-authored stories increase reading comprehension; and (7) how a child using language experience views him/herself and reading. The items in this bibliography date from 1966 to 1988 and include journal articles and documents in the ERIC database. For the purposes of this bibliography, the terms language experience approach, integrated language arts program, and whole language are interchangeable. Included are a summary of the literature, conclusions, recommendations, and 39 references. (RS)

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AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE LITERATURE DEALING WITH LANGUAGE EXPERIENCE IN THE PRIMARY CLASSROOM

by

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Exit Project E/S 591

19 July 1988

CS211471

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INTRODUCTION

The teaching of reading through experiences has been a part of school curricula since the turn of the century. Miss Flora J. Cooke, a teacher at the Chicago Institute, introduced her "natural" method of teaching reading in 1900.[1] She theorized that children learn to talk because they both wish to communicate their ideas and learn to read. Reading was the stimulus when wishing to find out information, thus reading and writing reinforced each other.

During the 1910's Dewey expressed the same philosphy with his "learning by doing" experimental program.[2] In 1934, Dr. Nila B. Smith titled her program "experience method". Her approach used a child's own interests and experiences.[3] The method was widely accepted until the basal readers became popular during the 1940's.

Language experience again became popular during the 1960's and 1970's when classroom teachers explored the advantages of integrating the language arts program to include reading. In recent years discussion has centered again on the importance of developing a child's understanding that written symbols have

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[1]Gertrude H. Hildreth, "Experience-Related Reading for School Beginners," Elementary English 42 (1965): 280.
[2]Ibid., 281.
[3]Ibid., 282.

meaning and a child's understanding of this written code is a prerequisite to reading.[4]

In teaching reading through a language experience approach, the teacher's major task is to use the student's prior knowledge to set a purpose. These experiences are then written which emphasizes to the child that print is meaningful and a code for language.

Major research regarding an integrated language arts approach has dated as far back as the 1930's. This research concentrated on investigating an increase in overall achievement. During the 1964-65 school year, the First Grade Reading Studies was sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education for the purpose of determining if any one reading method was better for teaching first graders to read. The project funded 27 studies and involved approximately 30,000 pupils and 1,000 teachers. During the 1960's, research began to investigate other dimensions such as oral language development, the content of the written work, and affective factors.

Hall[5] stated the primary goal of a language arts instruction in the language experience framework was to develop the ability to communicate through speaking, reading, writing, and listening. She also included the goals of developing oral language skills, wide reading vocabulary, comprehension, and a

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[4]Christopher J. Ramig and MaryAnne Hall, "Reading Strategies of First Grade Children Taught By a Language Experience Approach and a Basal Approach," Reading World 19 (1980): 281.

[5]MaryAnne Hall, Teaching Reading as a Language Experience (Columbus, Ohio: Merrill Publishing Company, 1970), 24.

permanent interest in reading. Literature will be reviewed regarding these aspects of reading to determine if language experience could be an effective method to teach beginning reading. The study will also review literature that examined the rationale for using a language experience approach and what strategies children used in order to be successful readers.

For the purpose of this study, the terms language experience approach, integrated language arts program, and whole language will be interchanged. These three methods all refer to teaching reading by using a child's own writings and stresses the importance of learning language throught listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Strickland[1] found that children's language patterns at the time of school entry were more interesting and sophisticated than textbook writers would have us believe. Many teachers support this theory and with renewed interest are looking for research to support the use of language experience in the classroom.

This study will examine literature relating to the combining of reading-writing activities as described in a integrated language arts approach and whether this teaching method can improve a primary child's ability to read.

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[1]Ruth G. Strickland, The Language of Elementary Children: Its Relation to the Language of Reading Textbooks and the Quality of Reading of Selected Children. Bulletin of the School of Education, Indiana University, 38 (1962): 7.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study was conducted to examine the rationale for incorporating an integrated language arts program in a primary classroom, define how language experience effects reading strategies, and review the research related to its effectiveness as a reading method.

ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

This study examined literature concerning language experience in the following seven areas: 1) the rationale for incorporating language arts in the primary classroom; 2) whether using language experience aids the child in developing reading strategies; 3) the achievement scores of children using language experience; 4) whether language experience develops oral language skills; 5) whether language experience aids in increasing sight vocabulary; 6) whether self-authored stories increase reading comprehension; 7) and how a child using language experience views him/herself and reading.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The research relating to language experience has been conducted for sixty years. This research covered all aspects of reading from reading readiness to spelling. Recent research has investigated using language experience with the culturally and socioeconomically disadvantaged and children who speak English as a second language.

This study reviewed only a small fraction of the research and covered only a few aspects of reading. It was also limited to primary age children. The study did not review literature concerning teacher training or the role of the teacher in the classroom.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Basal reader - basic reader - book or program for developing basic reading skills which steadily progress in difficulty.

Beginning sight Vocabulary - The first words children learn to recognize, including their own names; names of other important people; color, number, and position words; days and months; and names of common classroom objects and area.

Comprehension - Meaning gained from what is written on a page (when read) or heard (when spoken).

Context clues - Clues to the meaning and/or pronunciation of an unknown word derived from the words preceding or following that word.

Controlled vocabulary - The careful introduction and limitation of new words for the beginning reader, with sufficient repetition to allow the child to learn these words easily.

Decoding - The process of taking words in print and changing them to spoken words.

First Grade Reading Series - A series of studies, sponsored by the Federal Government in the early 1960's. Various methods of teaching reading were compared to determine whether any one method was better than the others.

Follow Through Program - A United States educational enrichment program administered by the United States Office of Education. It provides special resources and curricula for the first, second, and third grades of elementary schools to maintain during school years the gains made by attending a Head Start Program.

Inference - process of obtaining logical judgement from a given premise or from observed data.

Initial Teaching Alphabet - ITA - system which used 43 visual symbols as a basis for teaching reading to beginners and as a means of avoiding the irregularies of the English language.

Key vocabulary - those words critical to a reader's understanding of a text's concepts.

Key vocabulary approach - words that have special or intense meaning to a child are elicited by the teacher and used as a vehicle for beginning reading instruction.

Language experience approach - an approach to learning to read. The student's or group's own words are written down and used as materials for instruction in reading, writing, spelling, speaking, and listening. Thus, this approach relies on children's oral language background to develop their reading skills.

Linguistics - the study of language in its widest sense rather than simple as a direct means of communication.

Miscue - an error made while reading orally.

Miscue analysis - Studying the types of errors made by students while they read orally.

Oral language skills - possession of ability to use language in speech in an effective, articular manner.

Pattern books - Books that employ repetitive language structures, rhyme, sequence, or predictable plots and familiar themes to stimulate children's interest and help them predict the next words or lines.

Phoneme-grapheme - relationship between speech sounds (phoneme) and written symbol (grapheme).

Phonics - initial consonants, consonant digraphs, consonant blends, vowels, vowel combinations, or special letter combinations to be learned usually in beginning reading.

Semantic cue - cue based on the meaning of language.

Sight vocabulary - all the words known instantly by a reader.

Syntactic cue - cue based on the nature of grammar and the structure of reading.

Eldon E. Ekwall and James L. Shanker, Teaching Reading in the Elementary School. (Columbus, Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company, 1985), 419-425.

LITERATURE RELATING TO RATIONALE

Agnew, Ann T. "Using Children's Dictated Stories to Assess Code Consciousness." The Reading Teacher. 35 (1982): 450-453.

The author contended that children understand how to read when they recognize the purpose of reading was to communicate ideas and that print was the medium of expression. "Code consciousness" was the phrase used by the author to refer to children's understanding of the technical features of writing, such as, words make up sentences and sentences make up paragraphs.

In the author's opinion, the language experience approach was well suited to helping children understand the function and technical features of reading. To aid the teacher in assessing an individual's code consciousness, the author devised an informal analysis, which was comprised of a series of tasks performed as the child read a previously dictated story.

Since learning to read required children to understand the technical features of print, they were well aided by a teacher who allowed them experience in composing print.

Hall, Maryanne. "Linguistically Speaking, Why Language Experience?" 19 (1972): 328-331.

The author defined linguistics as the process of learning to read through the written language. This relationship between reading and writing was also basic to teaching reading through the language experience approach. In terms of the beginning reader, the author stated seven reasons why reading should be taught through written experiences. Those seven statements are summarized as follows: 1) The beginning reader must view reading as a form of communication; 2) The beginning reader is a speaker of language; 3) The beginning reader must understand the relationship of oral language to print; 4) The beginning reader must understand the relationship of learning to write to learning to read; 5) The beginning reader should learn to read with materials written in his own language; 6) Beginning readers learn to read meaningful print; and 7) The beginning reader should learn to read orally with smooth and natural expression.

The author concluded that the language experience approach gave theoretical support to any teacher wishing to implement this approach.

Long, Diane D. "The Development and Implementation of A Modified Language Experience Approach to a Reading Program for the Pre-Operational Child." ERIC, 1984. ED 269 132.

The investigator addressed the problem of teaching developmentally delayed kindergarten students the cognitive skills that were required by many school curriculums. A modified language experience approach was developed by the author and field tested by 42 teachers in 16 school systems across the United States.

The rationale for developing the program was based on the Piagetian position that language transmits only what has been experienced; thus, young children best learn to read material that was derived from concrete, personal experiences.

Of the 42 original participants, 49 percent responded to the final questionnaire. Ninety-five percent of those reported they found the manual of use. The author concluded that the new method of incorporating language experience in the kindergarten curriculum could be effective.

Miller, Bonnie L. "Reading and Writing: Is There a Connection?" ERIC, 1982. ED 227 477.

The author cited research to support the hypothesis that reading and writing should be learned together. Reading and writing could be learned by imitating speech and without the child being aware of learning basic skills. In order to successfully incorporate reading and writing, the author recommended using a language experience approach.

The author suggested that teacher does not need to be a "Superteacher" to teach reading and writing together. But a teacher must believe that reading and writing processes are related and children learn to read and write when sharing meaningful experiences through print. The most important role for the teacher is to help the child learn to "read like a writer and write like a reader."

Stauffer, Russell G. "Theoretical Rationale of the Language Experience Approach." ERIC, 1971. ED 053 877.

The author defined language as a social tool, created by man for communication purposes. As social humans, children should be able to recognize the goal of reading and writing are to interact with others. Children naturally want to communicate their experiences and need to see that reading and writing are tools to accomplish this.

Jean Piaget's theories on child development were discussed as a background for determining when children will be ready to read and how children should learn to read. Learning was seen as being provoked by experiences, therefore, children need to be active to learn. The author contended that language arts instruction should be a total process that incorporates reading, writing, and speaking for egocentric and sociocentric purposes. The language experience approach lended itself towards these goals.

The author listed and described specific methods for the teaching of a language experience program. This program included dictation, word banks, word recognition skills, creative writing, library usage, curriculum usage, and record keeping.

LITERATURE RELATING TO STRATEGIES

Allen, Jobeth. "Theoretical Models of Reading: Implications for the Beginning Reader." ERIC, 1983. ED 240 518.

The author reviewed the debate between the bottom-up processing of reading that was text-driven and the top-down processing that was concept-driven. In order to assess which of these processes were used in learning to read, the author studied the beginning reading of Rachael, a five year old who expressed an interest in reading. The study attempted to document how interactive processing occurd naturally in some beginning readers.

Rachael was informally instructed in language experience where she was encouraged to write. When given the Ginn Informal Reading Inventory, Rachael was able to process unfamiliar text. The subject was able to effectively use an interaction of concept-driven and text-driven strategies to decode unfamiliar words and derive meaning.

The author concluded that if beginning readers depend on one form of instruction they are poorly equipped to handle the complexities of unfamiliar passages. Beginning readers can not be too dependent on meaning they bring to a text or on print as the sole source of meaning.

Evans, Mary Ann, and Thomas H. Carr. "Cognitive Abilities, Conditions of Learning, and the Early Development of Reading Skills." Reading Research Quarterly. 20 (1985): 327-346.

This study investigated the two views of reading. The first view, supported by the work of Kenneth Goodman, stated that learning to read was a knowledge-driven process. The second was the more tradition view that reading was a stimulus-driven process. The study was conducted in two sets of ten primary classrooms. One set was instructed by the language experience method where they dictated their own stories and constructed their own word banks (knowledge-driven). The second set was instructed with basal readers and workbooks (stimulus-driven).

The first phase of the study established that children could learn to read with either the basal program or by language experience. The second phase measured the students' abilities and criterion performance in five areas: information processing, linguistic maturity, social skills, reading achievement, and mathematical achievements.

Year end testing revealed little difference between the two groups in social skills or information processing abilities. The basal instructed groups did score higher on the Stanford Cloze Test. Surprisingly, the language experience groups showed a negative correlation between linguistic ability and reading skills. The investigators concluded that the children developed a set of information processing skills which were specific to written language in order to read. These skills were hard to learn without systematic instruction and correction feedback. Therefore, carefully organized direct instruction would seem a critical part of beginning reading. It was recommended that both approaches would be appropriate in the primary classroom.

Bond, Guy., and Robert Dykstra. "The Cooperative Research Program in First Grade Reading Instruction." Reading Research Quarterly. 2 (1967): 5-142.

Data collected from 27 individual studies was compiled and used in this study. Questions were asked concerning effective approaches to beginning reading, relationship of reading achievement and community, and what program would be most effective for high and low achievers.

The report concluded that a combination of approaches was more successful than a single approach. Using a language experience approach in conjunction with another method was effective.

Reading achievement was related to other characteristics but not necessarily to those included in the studies. The authors concluded that the prior knowledge a first grader brought to school was related to success in learning to read. Recognizing letters of the alphabet before entering first grade was the single most determinate of reading success.

The study revealed that no single method was more effective for pupils of high or low readiness.

The authors concluded that success in reading at the end of first grade is largely an individual accomplishment depending upon the pupil's ability to recognize words accurately and to associate meaning to these words.

Hahn, Harry, T. "Three Approaches to Beginning Reading Instruction--ITA, Language Arts, and Basic Readers." The Reading Teacher. 19 (1966): 590-594.

This study examined the effectiveness of three approaches for beginning reading instruction. The Initial Teaching Alphabet (ITA) and the language experience model stressed the importance of using writing to develop a child's expression. The basic reader approach used a popular basal and workbooks.

The population consisted of twelve school districts. Each school district provided three classrooms and three teacher (one for each approach). The ITA classrooms were equipped with an ITA library and set of Downing readers. The language experience teachers used experimental units developed by R. Van Allen. The basic reading teachers used a basal that they had not tried before.

All students received the Stanford Achievement Test, Primary Form, and the San Diego County Reading Attitude Test. A random sample of 55 students from each approach received the Gilmore Oral Reading Paragraphs and three word lists.

The reading attitude survey demonstrated that the children in all three approaches were enthusiastic about reading. The investigator also concluded that no one method was consistently superior to the other two. It was felt that there was some advantage to dropping the use of readiness books, preprimers, and primers and allowing children to dictate and record their own thoughts and ideas. This would seem effective in developing more meaningful reading vocabularies and increasing comprehension.

Hahn, Harry T. "Three Approaches to Beginning Reading Instruction--ITA, Language Experience and Basic Readers--Extended to Second Grade." The Reading Teacher. 20 (1967): 711-715.

The study was initiated in September 1964, when 12 school districts agreed to provide three classrooms each for the purpose of examining the following three approaches to beginning reading: Initial Teaching Alphabet (ITA), language experience, and basal readers. By the end of first grade, it was concluded that the children receiving ITA and language experience instruction achieved higher scores on various testing instruments, but the results was not significantly conclusive.

During the second year the students received similar instruction. The new Stanford Achievement Test, Primary Battery II was administered to the entire student population in May 1966. The results indicated that achievement gained at the end of first grade continued to show at the end of second grade. Those students instructed with language experience and ITA scored higher in overall achievement than the basal reader students.

The investigator further concluded that children who were given time for purposeful writing, speaking, and listening demonstrated greater understanding of basic reading skills than those children who received basal reading instruction. It was noted that the basal reader children did not have time to write, therefore, they did not develop the joy of self-expression that was evident in students instructed by the language experience approach.

Kendrick, William M. "A Comparative Study of Two First Grade Language Arts Program." The Reading Teacher. 20 (1966): 25-30.

The study was designed to answer the following hypothesis: would an experience approach to the teaching of reading produce different achievement results than the basic approach? In addition, surveys were taken to determine reading attitudes and interest.

The pupil population came from 41 elementary schools in the San Diego County school district and included 782 in the experimental group aand 827 in the control group. Those taught with the experimental method received instruction in writing, reading, and phonic skills. The control group used the Ginn Reading Series and instruction very closely followed the teacher's manual.

At the conclusion of 140 days, no significant differences were found between the two reading methods when measuring achievement or interest.

Stauffer, Russell G. "The Effectiveness of Language Arts and Basic Reader Approaches to First Grade Reading Instruction." The Reading Teacher. 20 (1966): 18-24.

The investigator compared a language arts approach to a basic reader approach to determine whether a language approach, that taught reading through children's own writing, would be effective for teaching beginning reading.

The experimental group consisted of 232 subjects who were instructed to communicate through oral language, written language, artistic ability, and dramatic ability. The 201 subjects in the control group continued to use the basic readers. The primary testing instruments were the Stanford Achievement Test and San Diego County Reading Attitude Test which were administered to each child in the study as a pretest in September and a posttest in May. A randomly selected population received a variety of other tests.

The author concluded that better reading achievement is likely to result when using a language arts approach to reading instruction. However, it was also concluded that both groups did achieve and either method would be an effective way to teach beginning reading. There was no differences expressed between the two groups in attitude towards reading.

Stauffer, Russell G., and W. Dorsey Hammond. "The Effectiveness of Language Arts and Basic Reader Approaches to First Grade Reading Instruction--Extended into Third Grade." ERIC 1968, ED 027 163.

The purpose of this study was to ascertain which students scored higher on reading achievement test; those students instructed with a language arts approach or a basic reading approach. The experimental group was composed of 311 pupils and 13 teachers. Those pupils were instructed by a language arts approach which stressed the basic communication skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The control group was composed of 265 pupils and 10 teachers. They were instructed with basal readers whose objectives were to promote reading comprehension and good reading habits.

The students were administered a battery of pretests in September and posttests in May. The experimental group scored significantly higher on reading ability, language, and eagerness to read scale. The results were not as significant in the third grade as in the first and second. The authors concluded that the experimental group had perhaps reached a plateau by the end of second grade and the control group was able to catch up during third grade. The investigators felt that the experimental group was able to gain higher test scores in language skills due to a focus on all communication skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Swanson, Beverly B. "The Beginner's Concepts about Reading Attitude, and Reading Achievement in Relationship to Language Exvironment." ERIC, 1981. ED 209 637.

The investigator examined first grade classrooms in 33 school systems for the purpose of determining if language experience methods were implemented in the classes how the beginning reader would conceive reading. A series of tests were administered to determine reading achievement and attitudes.

The study discovered that language experience activities were only taught in a few classrooms. There was no significant relationship found between the classrooms that used language experience methods and achievement. It was recommended that basals should be supplemented with a language experience program to ensure that first grade children receive meaningful language related reading instruction. Reading surveys suggested to the author that language experience may have a positive impact on the first grader's view of reading.

Wallace, Michael B. "Success in Reading and Writing. School Year 1985-86. Final Evaluation Report." ERIC, 1986. ED 285 881.

This study evaluated a new reading program implemented in the District of Columbia Public Schools beginning in January 1979. This program, called success, was used in pre-kindergarten through sixth grade. The program combined all language arts placing a great emphasis on reading and writing skills. Individualized instruction was considered a key element and a great many parents were used as volunteer instructors. The main goals of Success were to increase reading test scores, develop reading and writing skills, and to promote a positive self-concept.

The study compared the test scores of 320 third grade children who received Success instruction to 261 third grade children who were taught with a traditional basal program. The testing instrument was the California Test of Basic Skills which was administered each spring to all students in the school system. A comparison showed the students involved with the Success program scored significantly higher in vocabulary and comprehension skills than the students who received basal instruction. No significant difference was found between the two groups in total language scores.

The author concluded the results were positive, but as other methods were used by both groups, not all gains could be attributed to the Success program. An evaluation of teacher and principal interviewed proved a wide support for the program among the staff, evidenced by the fact that the classrooms using success had increased each year.

Gardiner, D. Elizabeth. "The Effect of a Language-Based Reading Approach upon the Reading Strategies of First Grade Children." ERIC, 1978. ED 167 959.

The author based this research on the assumption that reading was language-based and a thinking process.

The population consisted of 40 students from two separate school systems. Twenty of the children were placed in an experimental group and instructed with a language-based approach and 20 were taught using a basal reader. The teachers were fully trained by the investigator in teaching procedures, administering test instruments, and interpreting test results. The testing instrument was the Reading Miscue Inventory.

The author concluded that the experimental group used reading strategies more effectively by the end of first grade. Miscues by this group were corrected more often, affected less meaning change, and were more grammatically and semantically acceptable.

It was concluded that children who were instructed by a language-based method saw more relevancy in reading because they were reading their own words. Thus they achieved a higher level of words recognition and more effective use of reading strategies.

Ramig, Christopher J., and Mary Anne Hall. "Reading Strategies of First Grade Children Taught by a Language Experience Approach and a Basal Approach." Reading World 19 (1980): 280-289.

This study was conducted to ascertain whether children taught with a language experience approach differed with respect to reading strategies. The subjects were 21 first grade pupils instructed with a basal program and 21 first grade pupils from the language experience class. The data was collected the last two weeks of May 1977, by three graduate students who recorded the children's oral readings. The oral readings were analyzed according to a procedure described in the Reading Miscue Inventory. Each subject also read 25 words from the Harris-Jacobson Core List.

The data showed no significant differences between the groups in mean number of miscues. The only real difference noted was that the children instructed with language experience substituted more real words for list words. The conclusion was that children do indeed understand some of the fundamentals regarding the nature of written language. With no syntactic and semantic cues available, language experience children produced real word substitutions more often than basal instructed children because they had a better understanding that graphic symbols represent meaning.

Stauffer, Russell G., and John J. Pikulski. "A comparison and Measure of Oral Language Growth." Elementary Education. 51 (1974): 1151-1155.

This study analyzed oral language used by first grade children who were taught to read using a language experience approach.

The subjects were 50 children whose notebooks were analyzed on the following variables: average number of words per dictation; average number of sentences; average number of words in the longest sentence; average number of different prepositions and pronouns; and average number of different words. Observations were also recorded on the quality of the oral language used.

Results showed a definite increase over the year in the average number of words and sentences. It was concluded that sound instructional techniques would allow a child to progress at his own pace and increase his range of achievement in all areas of oral language.

Thomas, Sharon K. "The Effects of Reader-Authored Materials on Performance of Beginning Readers." ERIC, 1980. ED 203 283.

This study compared the reading performance of children reading their own dictated stories to reading from a basal reader. The population consisted of 8 first grade children whose oral readings were taped for analysis. The Reading Miscue Inventory developed by Goodman and Burke was used to code the oral readings and a miscue analysis procedure identified miscues and strategies.

The author concluded that the children as a group performed better on the dictated stories than on the text stories. The children who wrote their own stories created a more complex plot and the stories were better formed than the text stories.

Wilkinson, Ian A. G., and Cathy A. Brown. "Oral Reading Strategies of Year One Children as a Function of Level of Ability and Method of Instruction." Reading Psychology. 4 (1983): 1-9.

Using the Mount Gravatt Developmental Language Reading Program and the Language Experience Reading Program which both employ the language experience approach to the teaching of reading, the study attempted to determine whether the oral reading errors of children at the beginning reading level could be differentiated on the basis of (1) level of reading ability and (2) method of reading instruction.

Sixty-six subjects were randomly selected and their oral reading performance was assessed based on two sets of story material compiled from 100 words taken from program books read by the children earlier in the school year. One set of material comprised of language familiar to subjects taught under the Mount Gravatt Program, and the other set comprised language familiar to subjects taught under the Language Experience Reading Program. The LERP placed more of an emphasis on vocabulary development, whereas the Mount Gravatt program attempted to extend control beyond the vocabulary level, to control the entire oral language structure. The children read orally from both sets of material. Each child's reading performance was coded according to criteria adapted from the Reading Miscue Inventory.

Two separate studies were conducted. The first used only those children receiving the Mount Gravatt program and concluded that children's use of contextual information was a major factor discriminating between good and poor readers. The second study incorporated both groups and concluded that the children instructed by the Mount Gravatt program had fewer mean percentage errors. This lead the authors to conclude that an instructional program which emphasized control over the oral-written link in beginning reading, such as the Mount Gravatt program, may be effective in developing the use of proficient oral reading strategies.

Asplund, Betsy B., and Cynthia S. Sunal. "The Effectiveness of the Language Experience Approach as a Supplement to a Basal Reader Program." ERIC, 1976. ED 182 705.

The authors recognized the importance of sight vocabulary to reading comprehension. They questioned if sight vocabulary could be increased with a reading method other than the basal readers. The purpose of the study was to determine the effect of language experience approach on acquiring sight vocabulary.

A population of 10 second graders were instructed each morning using a basal reader. The group was divided in the afternoon with five continuing basal instruction and five dictating and reading their own stories. The 10 children were placed in the program because of difficulty in learning to read. A pretest was administered consisting of 180 basic sight words taken from the basal program. After four weeks of instruction, the 180 words were given as a posttest.

The children receiving language experience instruction scored 10 percent higher than the basal group and had a combined mean gain of 20.8 words. The authors concluded that language experience reinforced the basal words by allowing the children to use the words in their own stories and thus increasing meaning.

Dzama, Mary Ann. "Comparing Use of Generalizations of Phonics in LEA, Basal Vocabulary." The Reading Teacher. 28 (1975): 466-472.

The author compared Clymer's phonic generalizations to a composite vocabulary list of 2,025 words taken from 225 first graders' acquired sight words. Each word was recorded for phonetic respelling and syllabic division and then categorized according to utility. Each word was analyzed against each generalization to determine whether it conformed to a rule or not and whether the word was of high or low frequency. Clymer established that 18 of the 45 generalizations met his criteria for the basal reader example. Twenty generalizations were found to be significantly present in the acquired sight vocabulary. The conclusion was that if children are to learn phonic generalizations early, the language experience approach is more suited to that type of learning. The suggestion was that phonic generalizations should not be taught. Instead teachers should be reeducated to instruct a more linguistic based program; that is, teach reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills which provides adequate examples for word-analysis study.

Kelly, Ann Marie. "Sight Vocabularies and Experience Stories." Elementary English. 52 (1977): 327-328.

The question asked by the author was whether children instructed by language experience can establish a larger sight vocabulary than children who learn to read instructed through the basal program?

The subjects were 64 third grade pupils who were one or more years behind in reading. Half the students dictated and read their own stories. The other half read from basals. All children were taught word recognition skills. At the end of 15 weeks the children were given the Botel Word Recognition Test as a pretest and again as a posttest. The total number of recognized words were recorded and tallied. A comparison showed the experimental group had a basic sight vocabulary 23 percent greater than the basal group.

The conclusion was that children instructed in a language experience approach did as well in vocabulary development, and sometimes better than those children taught with the basal readers. The author suggested more studies to measure changes in affective behavior.

Packer, Athol B. "Ashton-Warner's Key Vocabulary for the Disadvantaged." The Reading Teacher. 23 (1970): 559-564.

This study attempted to discover if the vocabulary that children ask to learn in the Ashton-Warner approach was different than the words presented in the pre-primers and primers of basal readers. The children were Follow-Through kindergarten and first graders attending school in Arkansas, Florida, Pennsylvania, or Washington. Most children received 30-45 minutes a day developing key vocabulary as defined by Ashton-Warner. A variety of activities were conducted to provide experiences and enhance language development.

The data collected was the key vocabulary lists of the children and the list of words taken from the pre-primers and primers of the major basal series used in the four school systems. The lists of words were divided into 14 categories. The results showed that the number of words asked for had little or no relationship to the number of words found in the basal readers. The study concluded that a child's own key vocabulary was more meaningful and easier to use when expressing written thoughts.

Relfman, Betty, et al. "Effects of Word-Bank Instruction on Sight Word Acquisition: An Experimental Note." Journal of Educational Research. 74 (1981): 175-178.

The purpose of the study was to determine if additional word-bank instruction could improve the effects of the language experience approach on the acquisition of sight word vocabulary by first grade students. The subjects were 19 students divided into two groups and taught by the language experience approach. The experimental group was given an additional word-bank treatment for a 10-minute session, three times a week for 12 weeks.

The Dolch Basic Sight Word List served as a pretest and posttest for measuring acquired sight vocabulary. The experimental group indicated a 24 percent improvement in sight word development associated with receiving the word-bank treatment.

The study concluded that teachers may be able to increase students' vocabulary competency when using the language experience approach by implementing the word-bank procedure.

Shapiro, Jon, and Lee Gunderson. "A comparison of Vocabulary Generated by Grade 1 Students in Whole Language Classrooms and Basal Reader Vocabulary." Reading Research and Instruction. 27 (1988): 40-46.

A major criticism of language experience instruction was the lack of vocabulary control. Due to the recent popularity of using language experience as part of the whole language approach, the authors sought to determine if vocabulary should indeed be a concern.

Two first grade classrooms participated in the study conducted in one elementary school in Vancouver, British Columbia. Those 52 students wrote for one hour per day. Some writing was done as a class and others were written individually. All writings done for the entire year were recorded into computer files. A list of vocabulary words were also compiled from the Ginn 720 reading series and recorded in a separate computer file. A comparison of the two lists showed that the 25 most frequent words used by the children were also on the Ginn 720 word list and the Dolch list. Excluding proper nouns, 92 percent of the basal readers' vocabulary appeared in the children's writing.

The investigators concluded that children exposed to the whole language approach generated a more interesting vocabulary, therefore, stimulating more interest in reading.

Allen, Jobeth. "Inferential Comprehension: The Effects of Text Source, Decoding Ability, and Mode." Reading Research Quarterly. 20 (1985): 603-615.

The study examined how children comprehended their own stories, specifically the drawing of inference. In addition, the study was manipulated to answer how decoding affects comprehension and how the reading mode (silent vs. oral) affects inferential comprehension. The 70 subjects were first, second, and third grade students who were divided into three ability groups: fast decoders, slow inaccurate decoders, and slow accurate decoders. All subjects were tested on three types of readings: stories written by peers, self-written stories, and adult written literature. Each subject read orally or silently for 15-30 minutes daily. After reading, six inference questions were asked.

The conclusion was that children could answer inference questions quite well on their own stories, but not very well on peer stories, and least well on adult stories. The important factor seemed to be interest which was heightened by the knowledge that children were reading their own stories or stories of their classmates. Children in the study identified these stories as more real. The story structure was also written in the child's own language. Schema played a role in remembering and inferring because the children were more familiar with all the concepts.

Mode by itself was not a significant factor in determining how children comprehend. The study did support the theory that word recognition accuracy was a powerful predictor of inferential comprehension.

Buckner, John H., and et al. "Supportive Evidence for the Language Experience Approach at the Kindergarten Level." ERIC, 1978. ED 157 635.

This study investigated whether kindergarten children taught with language experience entered first grade with significantly higher reading vocabulary and comprehension skills as those who were instructed with standard reading readiness materials. The experimental group was comprised of 22 first graders who had been exposed to language experience during kindergarten. The control group was an equal number who had received the traditional treatment.

At the end of kindergarten the children were tested using the Gates-MacGinite Reading Test of Readiness Skills. All children received traditional basal instruction during first grade. The Gates MacGinite Reading Test, Primary A was administered at the end of first grade to measure vocabulary and comprehension progress.

Significantly higher scores were recorded for those children who had received language experience instruction during kindergarten. The authors concluded that a language experience program should be implemented in all kindergarten classrooms.

Sampson, Michael R., et al. "Student Authorship and Reading: Joy of Literacy." ERIC, 1982. ED 236 551.

The authors stated that reading is difficult for children because beginning reading programs broke the natural, meaning-based rhythm that has brought children success as speakers of the language. They felt that beginning reading instruction must start with the child's language. They further concluded that basals limit opportunities for either vocabulary growth or the development of an appreciation of the joy that reading can bring.

The purpose of the study was to investigate whether children could learn vocabulary through student-authored language more successful than the language of basal readers. The subjects were 18 first grade children. The Spache Readability Formula was used to determine the readability level of all 18 children in the study. The nine students reading from the basal scored a 1.8 grade equivalent, whereby the nine students who read dictated stories scored 2.4-4.0.

The Reading Miscue Inventory was used to analyze oral reading performance. The results showed that children who used language experience had more efficiently developed strategies for correcting miscues. The miscues produced interrelationships that allowed little meaning change and no loss in comprehension. Basal readers' oral reading miscues were changed to maintain meaning. Story telling was used to assess comprehension. Children instructed with basals scored a 70 percent, whereby children taught with language experience recalled 80 percent correctly.

The authors concluded that children would profit from reading high-interest instructional materials which far exceed the readability level of their assigned basal.

Shafer, Robert E. "Children's Interpretations in Sustaining Writing: Studies in an English Primary School." ERIC, 1980. ED 193 682.

The subjects were 31 students attending a primary school in rural England. The school was identified as using language experience in the teaching of all disciplines. After all the subjects were studied, 10 were chosen for the study. These first grade students were of average ability and considered "normal" in their social interactions. The data was collected for three months during the spring of 1980.

One major observation noted by the author was the way the children took responsibility for their own learning. They wrote stories from a variety of experiences, employed highly individual coping processes, and viewed writing in ways peculiar to their own person.

The children developed the ability to form small groups for the purpose of learning. The investigator concluded that working in small groups provided significant variables in selecting writing modes and affected the understanding and interpretation of assigned writings.

Bridge, Connie A., et al, "Using Prdictable Materials vs. Preprimers to Teach Beginning Sight Words." The Reading Teacher. 36 (1983): 884-891.

This study compared the effectiveness of beginning reading instruction for slow learners using predictable materials and language experience stories verses a typical preprimer. Sixteen first grade children were used in the study. The experimental group consisted of eight children instructed with six patterned books and dictated language experience stories. The eight children in the control group used the preprimer Rockets. The children were pretested and posttested on 45 sight vocabulary words taken from Rockets, plus 32 additional words.

The students using patterned books and experience stories learned significantly more vocabulary words than the students using the preprimer. The experimental group relied a great deal more on the use of context clues. The control group relied solely on grapho-phonic information.

The study showed a marked difference in attitude towards reading. Hiebert's Protocol for Interest in Reading was given before and after the study. The experimental group reported more positive feelings.

The study concluded that teachers who use patterned books and language experience as a resource for reading and writing activities will help beginning readers acquire sight vocabulary, use context clues for decoding unfamiliar words, and develop positive feelings towards reading.

Dobson, Lee N. "Learn to Read by Writing: A Practical Program for Reluctant Readers." Teaching Exceptional Children. 18 (1985): 30-36.

Most first grade curricula was geared to the development of proficient readers. However, the author contended that young children understand the written language and may write before they read. The purpose of the study was to observe whether children could write meaningful text.

The subjects were 8 first grade children who had failed to progress during the first semester of school. They were placed in an intervention program designed to involve them in their own learning. Each child was issued a notebook, felt-tip pens, and pencils. The teacher instructed them to communicate in writing as if they were speaking. They were encouraged to interact with each other without adult intervention. Observations were made to aid in developing strategies for writing and discovering possible reading problems.

By the end of first grade, each child showed increased competency and confidence. This carried over into the regular classroom where the children participated with greater interest. Their accomplishments in the resource room bolstered their self-esteem as they could now read their own stories and participate in a reading group. The author concluded that writing should be an important part of any primary classroom.

Foley, Christy L. "Four Longitudinal Studies of the Starter Approach, a Beginning Reading Strategy for Nonreaders." ERIC, 1987. ED 284 174.

This study investigated the effectiveness of using the Starter Approach when instructing nonreaders of any age. This approach combined the techniques of language experience, echo reading, and repeated readings.

The second part of the study was conducted with 29 kindergarten students who used the approach for a ten week period. The control group was instructed with the Open Court basal reading program and the experimental group used the six-step Starter Approach plus Open Court. The Ekwall Basic Sight Word Test showed a 11.2 gain in sight vocabulary for the control group and a 19.0 gain for the experimental group.

Attitude was measured by the Likert scale format. On a scale of 1-5, the experimental group scored a very high 4.3.

The investigator concluded that it would be beneficial to all nonreaders to supplement the basal program with the Starter Approach.

Pollack, John F., and Garth H. Brown. "Observing the Effects of Reading Instruction." ERIC, 1980. ED 198 500.

This study investigated the links between different reading programs and children's understanding of how to read and their attitude towards reading. The Reading Miscue Inventory was used to assess how children read and interviews determined children's enjoyment of reading. A language experience method, a basal skills approach, and the decoding approach used in "Words in Color" were the three models evaluated.

The population consisted of third grade children from three primary schools in Melbourne, Australia. Fifteen children were selected from each approach. The children had received reading instruction since kindergarten in their respective approach.

The assessment of the Reading Miscue Inventory showed little significant differences between the three reading methods. Interviews revealed little relationship between method and attitude towards reading. The investigators concluded that the teacher's influence was the most important factor in determining attitude.

SUMMARY

Stauffer defined (1) language as a social tool and children must view reading and writing as a tool to interact with others. Agnew and Long agreed that reading must have meaning, therefore, using personal experiences and interests would provide that element. Children read because they want to discover new information or be entertained. They write because they want to share knowledge or personal experiences.

How children read was investigated by Allen, Evans, and Carr. These investigators agreed that children who were instructed with a language experience approach used prior knowledge and decoding to process print. Beginning readers need a balanced program that provides plenty of experiences and learning opportunities, plus a good foundation in word attack skills.

When summarizing 27 First Grade Reading studies, Bond and Dykstra concluded that prior knowledge was related to success in reading, and teaching effectiveness plus the child's disposition may be more important than method. Hahn, Kendrick, and Stauffer were three of the original First Grade Reading researchers who compared the language experience approach to the basal readers. In three separate studies, involving hundreds of pupils, they concluded achievement test scores were good for children receiving the language experience approach, but not significantly. Hahn and Stauffer extended their studies into the

second year with similar results. In fact, Stauffer and Hammond (28) reported the slight increase in test scores achieved by the students receiving the language experience method was washed out by third grade.

Two more recent studies conducted to examine achievement (Swanson, 1981 and Wallace, 1986) concluded the test results were positive, but not conclusive.

Studies done by Gardiner, Ramig and Hall, Stauffer and Pikulski, Thomas, and Wilkinson and Brown concluded that a language arts approach can improve oral language skills. Children were reading their own words and this provided them with proficient reading strategies for correcting miscues and deriving meaning.

In building children's vocabulary, listening, speaking, reading, and writing vocabularies must be increased. During the 1960's, the basal reader companies strongly criticized the language experience approach for not providing a controlled vocabulary (Shapiro,41). Shapiro investigated this concern and concluded that children exposed to an integrated language arts program developed a larger and more interesting vocabulary than children who received basal reading instruction. Comparison studies were also conducted by Asplund and Sunal, Kelly, and Packer with similar results.

Reifman examined the positive results seen when giving language experience students extra vocabulary treatment through word bank activities. Finally, Dzama's study suggested a

language experience approach gave students better word-analysis skills because that method generated more words suited to learn phonic generalizations.

The rationale statements for the language experience approach placed a great emphasis on reading as a means to communicate and the material children used was more meaningful for the learner. From the beginning children should view reading as comprehending written language. A frequent criticism of the language experience approach is its failure to encourage children to understand ideas written by other authors: adults and peers (Shafer, 4).

A study done in England by Shafer and another study by Allen concluded that children derive more meaning from their own stories. Buckner used a standardized test and a control group to conclude that children receiving language experience treatment score higher in comprehension skills. Sampson used story telling and a control group to assess comprehension and concluded the experimental group scored 10 percent higher in answering comprehension questions. All these investigations recommended using a language experience approach in primary grades to increase comprehension.

Since Bond and Dykstra (117) reported success in reading is somewhat dependent upon a child's level of interest, it seemed important to investigate the relationship between language experience as the reading method and affective behavior.

Bridge and Foley reported more positive feelings towards

reading by children receiving language experience than the children reading from a basal reader. Dobson's study found that children who were failing to learn to read gained a great deal of self-confidence once they could write and read their own stories. Contrary to these findings, Pollack's analysis of student interviews revealed little relationship between method and attitude. He concluded the teacher's attitude was what determined attitude.

CONCLUSION

A language experience approach or an integrated language arts program placed emphasis on all communication skills: speaking, reading, writing, and listening. Studies have not supported its use to increase achievement for the majority of primary age children. Studies have shown achievement scores to be good, but as other factors entered in, not conclusive.

Various investigations supported the rationale for using a language experience approach, but recommended its use as a supplement to the basal program. Hall (331) summarized that a beginning reader used language to relate graphic symbols to the oral language he already knew.

The investigation of more specific areas of reading revealed more positive results. Dictating and reading of experience stories greatly increased number of words recognized (Kelly, 328). Vocabularies were more varied and interesting because personal experiences wereused to generate text (Shapiro, 45). Comprehension studies were positive in that language experience students derived more meaning from their own stories. Stauffer and Pikulski (1155) reported an increase in oral reading skills because language experience capitalized on the child's existing language skills.

Most importantly, some research showed a positive relationship between language experience and affective behavior. Children who create their own stories had a sense of

accomplishment which increased their self-image (Dobson, 35).

RECOMMENDATIONS

A language experience approach was not proven to increase the standardized test scores of most pupils. It was seen as an effecive method to increase children's acquired vocabulary and understanding of printed material. Those instructed with language experience were able to process text by employing more sophisticated reading strategies. Interest in reading was increased because children were creating and reading their own text.

Long, Allen, Evans, Buckner, and Foley supported the rationale for using language experience, but recommended it should be implemented as a supplement to other reading programs. Evans (345) concluded that reading instruction should fall between the two approaches. The students in her study were only able to successfully use a language approach after print-specific skills were acquired.

Bond, Dykstra, and Pollack concluded that a more important element was the teacher not the method. Bond and Dykstra (113) called for future research to center on teacher and learning situations rather than methods and materials. Their recommendation was to train better teachers of reading rather than to expect a miracle in the form of materials.

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RESUME

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Educational Background: Graduated from North Central High School in 1963. Earned a B.S. degree in 1967, from Bowing Green State University in Bowling Green, Ohio. Attended the College of Wooster in Wooster, Ohio from 1980-81 for the purpose of earning an elementary education certificate. Started my graduate degree in 1985 at I.U.S.B.

Employment Experience: Taught American History and American Government from 1967-69 at Ritenour High School near St. Louis, Missouri. Substituted the following year in the Bridgeton, Missouri. Substituted in 1972-73 for the Lakewood Schools in Lakewood, Ohio. Substituted from 1981-84 for the Wooster City Schools and several county schools. Substituted in 1985 for the Penn Harris Madison School Corporation. From 1985-86, was an instructional aide for PHM. During that year I supplemented the language arts instruction for the 5th and 6th grader classes. From 1986-present taught first grade at Mary Frank in the PHM system.

I developed an interest in using language experience this past year. My reading students were of low academic ability and many were unmotivated. I found language experience an effective tool to increase the interest and aid vocabulary retention. This fall my language arts students will be the lowest ability students. I am hoping this study will provide me with a tool to more effectively teach these students. My graduate classes included Advanced Study in the Teaching of Reading in the Elementary School, Diagnosis and Correction of Reading Difficulties in the Classroom, and Practicum in Reading.